



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

RUSSIA

SUCCESS STORY

Courtroom Assistance at Your Fingertips

IT innovation helps courts meet the public's needs.



photo: R. RODIONOV/JRP, 2008

Valentina Demina uses an information kiosk to quickly check the status of her case at the Priokskiy District Court in Nizhni Novgorod, while another man waits for a court assistant to help him.

Information e-kiosks help Russian courts meet their obligations to the public more efficiently, by providing free, transparent, and accessible information on the law and court activities.

Russian citizens are used to waiting in long lines for judicial assistants to answer their questions about court cases, file legal documents, and collect payments. Those who cannot afford lawyers spend even more time navigating the legal system. The lack of readily-available information about court operations and inconsistent customer service are two reasons why many Russians have lost confidence in their legal institutions.

USAID has shown that installing easy-to-use electronic information kiosks in courts is one way to address these issues and support Russian government judicial reform initiatives that put a priority on court automation.

In February 2007, USAID's Judicial Reform and Partnerships (JRP) Project installed tamper-resistant, touch-screen, information kiosks at five pilot courts across Russia. These information kiosks help citizens gain quick access to legal information while freeing up court clerks from answering routine questions, thus making the work of the court more efficient. The software for the kiosks, developed by the Voskhod Research Institute, is integrated with the courts' IT system, which gives the public direct access to accurate and up-to-date court information while preserving anonymity and privileged data.

The new kiosks are making things easier for court workers, as well as the public. According to Ludmila Ilinichna Beliakova, head of the Priokski District Court's Case Management Department: "The kiosks save us a lot of time that we used to have to spend answering general questions on court operation that we can now spend giving people advice on more complicated, specific questions."

The five pilot courts participating in JRP are among the first courts in Russia where such kiosks have been installed, but their success is catching on. The Russian Judicial Department has committed itself to financing the installation of information kiosks in all Russian courts by the end of 2011, thus spreading the benefits of this technology across the country.